

Of the Reverence due to God's Sanctuary.

A
S E R M O N,

Preach'd at the PARISH-CHURCH of

St. Botolph Bishopsgate,

UPON THE

Occasion of OPENING it, after
the REBUILDING of it, *De-*
cember 8, 1728.

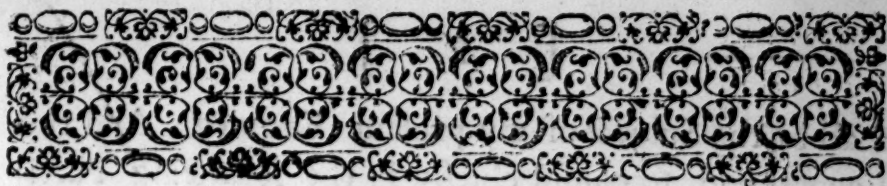
By STEPHEN GRIGMAN, A. M. Cu-
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rer of the United Parishes of *St. George*
Botolph-Lane, and *St. Botolph by Billingsgate*.

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LEVIT. XIX. Part of Verse 30.

Ye shall Reverence my Sanctuary.



H A T God, the Author and Preserver of all Things, is a Being, who hath a just Title to our best Services, as well publick as private, and that the more general and unanimous our Addresses are to him, the more acceptable they prove; Mankind, however they may differ in other Matters, seem, in this, to be well agreed: It is, indeed, the Voice of Reason, one of the first Principles of natural Religion, every where received, every where approved of. Now, for the regular Discharge and Execution of this Publick Duty, it is not only expedient but necessary that proper and suitable Places be appointed and singled out, wherein all Persons, when call'd upon, may appear, and thereby have an Opportunity of shewing how far they are concern'd for the Honour of God, and the Welfare of their own Souls. The Reverence which is due to these religious Places, the Respect we are oblig'd to pay them above all others,

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shall be the Subject of my present Enquiry: And this I apprehend to consist chiefly in the following Particulars;

1. IN solemnly separating such Places from common Use.
2. IN beautifying and adorning them.
3. IN frequently attending upon the Service perform'd in them. And,
4. IN decently behaving ourselves, when there.

FIRST, Then, the Reverence we owe to publick Places of Worship, must be express'd in solemnly separating them from common Use. If we trace the Proceedings of Mankind from the very Creation of the World, successively through the several Ages of it, we shall find that in every Country, where the least Pretensions to Religion were kept up, the Inhabitants set apart Places of Retirement for the Service of the Deity. And it is not improbable, but that some Part, even of Paradiſe, was dedicated to this Purpose: But, most certain it is, that the Patriarchs, who liv'd abroad in Booths and Tents; and so were oblig'd often to remove, for the Conveniency of fresh Pasture, did, wherever they came, erect Altars upon some eminent Ground, and enclose them about, setting thereby a Mark of Distinction upon them. Afterwards we read, that when
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the *Israelites* wander'd through a barren Waste, without any fix'd Habitation, they were commanded to make a moving Tabernacle, before which they were to worship and adore the Majesty of Heaven: But when they arrived at the Promised Land, Places for religious Duties were more punctually appointed, and determin'd by God himself. In like manner, when Christianity first made its Entrance into the World, the Professors of it had several Places appropriated to religious Uses: They were for a while, indeed, forc'd, by Reason of Heathen Rage and Malice, to assemble and meet together in some upper Rooms of private Houses, appointed for that Purpose; but no sooner did the Heat of Persecution, and the angry Resentments of their Enemies begin to abate, but they took Care to build little Oratories: And, in Process of Time, as the Civil Powers soften'd in Favour of the Christian Religion, and became dispos'd to give it a fair and impartial Hearing, they every where rais'd noble and magnificent Churches in Honour of their dear Saviour and Redeemer *Jesus Christ*. And now, if the Dictates of bare Reason, if the Command of God himself, and the Practice of *Jews* and *Christians* agreeing thereto, carry any Weight or Authority with them, we are surely bound to set apart, and keep up Places for Publick Worship. But then, it is not here to be suppos'd, that the sole devoting them to sacred Uses is of itself

sufficient ; there is something more required to give and secure to them a due Reverence, and that is, a solemn and formal Consecration. The Light of Nature could inform Men, that holy Actions ought to be perform'd in holy Places, distinguish'd from vulgar Use by some external Ceremony of Veneration and Respect : For it is not, as some People have suggested, the Performance of religious Duties that gives the Title of Holiness to Places, any more than the Actions of a Society in a private Man's House entitle that House to be call'd a Publick or Common Hall ; for, 'till the Right, or Property of it be made over to the Publick, it is still, notwithstanding whatever may have been transacted in it, a Private House : So, though we may exercise all the Offices of Religion in any Place, yet, 'till by some outward Ceremony we have formally surrender'd it up to God, and wholly divested ourselves of all Property in it, it is no more the *House of God*, nor can any more challenge the Title of Holiness, than our Closets or Chambers, where we are suppos'd constantly to put up our Prayers to our Maker. It is true, *the Earth is the Lord's, and the Fullness thereof*, yet some Parts of it may more peculiarly than others be stiled his ; inasmuch as he is pleas'd to exhibit there more Marks of his Favour than elsewhere : And such are those Temples, or Churches, that have been solemnly devoted and dedicated to him ; which he takes Possession.

session of, and, from the very Time of their Consecration, he hath a new kind of Claim to them, distinct from that which he had before. This Ceremony of consecrating Churches, however misrepresented by some Men as *Popish* and superstitious, is warranted to us from Scripture itself. Thus we read of *Jacob*, *Gen. xxviii. 16, 17, 18.* that when he beheld the Vision, and awaked from Sleep, and said, *How dreadful is this Place!* That he arose up early in the Morning, and took the Stone which he had for his Pillow, and set it up for a Pillar, and pour'd Oil on the Top of it; and when it was consecrated by this Action, he call'd the Name of the Place *Bethel*, which in *Hebrew* signifies the *House of God*: And so well pleas'd was God with what *Jacob* had done, that he afterwards distinguish'd himself by the Name of the *God of Bethel*, as a Place devoted to his Service. Accordingly, when *Jacob* was return'd from *Padan-Aram*, God commanded him to go up to *Bethel*, and to make there an Altar to Him who appear'd to him, when he fled from *Esau* his Brother. And it is the Conjecture of some learned Men, that when *Jeroboam* made choice of *Bethel*, to set up a Golden Calf therein, for the Use of his idolatrous Subjects, he had Respect unto its Consecration by *Jacob*. Thus likewise in Regard to the Tabernacle; tho' God himself prescrib'd both the Matter and Form of it, nay even condescended to no-

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minate the very Workmen that were to be employ'd in the Embroidery of it, yet would not suffer it to be made use of in his Publick Worship, 'till it had been dedicated; and therefore he speaks to *Moses*, *Exod. ixl. 9.* in this Manner, *Thou shalt take the Anointing-Oil, and anoint the Tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the Vessels thereof; and it shall be holy.* After these Examples, we find *Solomon* dedicating the Temple, soon after he had finish'd it, by Prayer and Sacrifice: And scarce had he made an end of these, before the Lord, to shew his Acceptance of them, and to assure this wise King, that he had taken Possession of the Temple, sent Fire from Heaven, which in an Instant consumed the Sacrifices. Upon so truly joyful Occasion, the King of *Israel* appointed and kept a Feast Seven Days together; during which Time he offer'd Two and Twenty Thousand Oxen, and a Hundred and Twenty Thousand Sheep: And this I think sufficient to vindicate the Rite of consecrating Churches, which when once pass'd upon them, they cannot be alienated from the Service of God without Sacrilege, nor applied to any other Use without Prophanation; for, as the Divine Majesty is holy, so it is manifestly a Part of that Honour we owe to God, that those Things wherewith and whereby he is served should not be common and promiscuous, but reserved solely for sacred Purposes.

SECONDLY, Another Part of that Reverence due to God's Sanctuary, consists in the beautifying and adorning it. The very Heathens thought no Cost, no Pains too much for the decking and embellishing the Temples of their imaginary Gods. Both Art and Nature were call'd in to their Assistance, when they were employ'd in this Work : And it was their Ambition, that their Temples, if possible, might be as immortal as the Deities which they suppos'd dwelt in them. The Temples of *Apollo* at *Delphos*, and of *Diana* at *Ephesus*, for their Richness and Finery, were look'd upon as the Wonders of the World : And the Temple of the True God at *Jerusalem*, was as noble and glorious as Hands could make it. When *David* gave Instructions to his Son *Solomon* for building it, he required, that it should be exceeding magnificall, 1 *Chron.* xxii. 5. and the Reason, afterwards alledg'd, is itself very awful and just ; for, says he, *The Palace is not for Man, but for the Lord God*. And the same Royal Person, 2 *Sam.* vii. 2. could not forbear, out of a pious Zeal for God's Glory, complaining of the Indecency of the Thing, that he himself should dwell in a House of Cedar, and, the Ark of God dwell only, within Curtains. What has been hitherto said is enough, one would think, to put those Men to the Blush who condemn all Church Ornaments as vain and ridiculous ; Men, who at the
same

same time grudge at no Expences in beautifying and
 setting off to the best Advantage, their own Habitati-
 ons. Shall the Almighty vouchsafe, in a peculiar man-
 ner, to take up his Residence among us here on Earth,
 and shall not we endeavour to provide the most ho-
 nourable Reception for him? It is allow'd, that God
 does not set any Value upon outward Splendor and
 Pomp, barely as such; but then, if we entirely ex-
 clude these, we seem to have very little Regard to
 his glorious Name. We ask not, we desire not any
 Ornaments here, but what are chaste, grave and vene-
 rable. Religion should not be expos'd to the World
 in a wanton, or too gay an Habit; should not be set
 forth with the Fucus and Gaudiness of an Harlot; but
 then suffer her not to appear naked, or in a loose Un-
 drefs, without the least Ornament; allow her the mo-
 dest, the comely Garb of a discrete Matron, such as is
 sufficient to secure her from Shame and Contempt, and
 give her some tolerable Figure in the Eyes of the
 World. If some Men, through a misguided Zeal
 have been too lavish and extravagant in decking her
 out, and have shew'd too much Spruceness about her,
 this can never be a just Reason why we, on the con-
 trary, should affect to appear like Slovens, and ill-bred
 Rusticks in Religion, or think any Thing good enough
 to be made use of in God's Service. But the bestowing
 proper Ornaments upon God's House is not only an In-
 stance

stance of Respect due from us to him, but is also a useful means of promoting Religion; for outward Objects will always affect the Mind with Impressions, according to the Nature of them. Thus, when we enter *God's House*, where Grandeur and Beauty jointly present themselves to our View, we must needs be strongly touch'd and mov'd: These Things will instantly convey to us awful and solemn Thoughts, will help to remind us of the Deity that resides there, and of Course will work us up to a good Pitch of Devotion, if we attend the Impressions they have made upon us. Few, if any, in this imperfect State, where Flesh and Blood so much prevail, are capable of relishing a purely abstracted Religion; outward Gestures and Representations are therefore very necessary Helps of Devotion, and will continue to be such till that Time come, when human Nature shall be refined from these Dregs and Sedements with which it is at present tainted. But of all the outward Helps that have been made Use of, to excite and keep up Mens Devotion in their Publick Assemblies, none is more serviceable to this Purpose, than Church Musick; by which I mean not only Vocal, but also Instrumental: A Way of Worship, which was early introduced, and constantly practised among the *Jews* with great Pomp, Parade and Solemnity. There was hardly any one musical Instrument then known, which they did not employ

in sounding forth, and celebrating the Praises of the great God ; accordingly *David* in *Psalms* 150th, calls upon them to *praise Him in the Sound of the Trumpet, upon the Lute and Harp, upon the String, and Pipe, upon the well tuned and loud Cymbals :* And many of this Royal Prophet's *Psalms*, through which there runs the noblest Vein of religious Fervour and true Piety, were composed and set to Musick, for the Service of the *Jewish* Church ; and the Primitive Christians, who were actuated with a laudable Zeal for God's Honour and Glory, as soon as the Times would permit, were not wanting in this Respect ; but almost every where in Places of Note, they did erect finely prepared Organs to assist them in their publick Devotions. And who is there that hears these Instruments played upon, with a becoming Gravity, that is not presently work'd up to the highest Pitch of Ardour ? How are all his Passions sooth'd, sweeten'd and entertain'd ? With what Rapture and Extasy is his Soul transported ? And with what Joy, Vigour and Triumph, does it ascend up towards Heaven, and long to join in Confort with Cherubim and Seraphim who are incessantly chanting forth Eucharistical Hymns and Anthems to the Lamb that sits upon the Throne ? There is scarce any Constitution so very stupid, any Soul so gross and languid as to be Proof against the powerful Charms of Musick. By a sweet kind of
Force

Force it conquers our Hearts, whether we will or no, it has us entirely under its Command and governs all our Actions and Motions ; making us sometimes gay, sometimes grave, sometimes bold and daring, according as the Sounds are variously modulated. When *Saul* was grievously oppressed with a deep Melancholy, contracted upon his being rejected of God and deprived by *Samuel* ; and when violently harrafs'd by an Evil Spirit from the Lord, his Servants could think of no better Expedient to divert him than Musick ; wherefore *David* was sent for to try his Skill before the King. And no sooner did this expert Artist touch the trembling and tuneful Lyre, but *Saul's* Spirits began to revive and chear up ; and the Evil Spirit so very troublesome to him before, unable to withstand the skilful Hand of this great Master, fled instantly away.

AND could Men be persuaded to lay aside their Prejudices, and with honest Minds frequent the Publick Service of the Church, assisted with vocal and instrumental Musick, it would in some Measure drive away the Evil Spirit of Faction and Discord, of Envy and Malice, and other disorderly Passions, at present so very busy and powerful among us. That this good End may be obtained, that Peace and Unity may be established, and we be enabled to worship the Lord in the *Beauty of Holiness*, I hope none here

among us, will be backward in contributing bountifully according to his Circumstances towards the erecting an ORGAN in this decent and handsome Building, the only Thing now wanting to render it complete. But as I am already satisfied, how well disposed you all are, towards carrying on so good a Work, I shall not any longer trespass upon your Patience on this Subject.

THIRDLY, We ought to express our Reverence to *God's-House*, by a constant Attendance upon the Service of it. God, no doubt, is conscious to our most private Devotions in our Closets, to every Ejaculation, to every pious Thought that ever rises in our Souls; he requires these and approves of them: But then He expects and commands also, that we pay him publick Homage and external Worship, wherein if we are deficient, we discharge but half our Duty. So sensible of this were the religious Part of the *Jews*, that they were very cautious of offending in this Point. Thus for Instance; it is recorded of *Anna* the Prophetess, that *She departed not from the Temple; but served God with Fasting and Prayer, Night and Day.* Luke ii. 37. It is said of *Simeon*, that Just and Devout Man, that he came by the Spirit into the Temple. Thus also *Daniel*, when
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in Captivity at *Babylon*, because he could not personally appear at the Temple-Worship, in the Zeal of his Soul, threw open the Windows of his Chamber towards *Jerusalem*, and in that Posture fell down on his Knees before God, expressing thereby the earnest desire he had, if possible, to be in the Sanctuary of God. *David* is a remarkable Pattern to us, of the Love of publick Worship. Of all the Calamities that beset that good Prince, none sat so heavy upon his Mind, none bore so hard upon him, as the being banished from the Presence of God in his Holy Temple. Observe with what patheticall Language, with what moving Accents of Grief and Sorrow he bemoans this his sad Case: *My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come to appear before God? One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of my Life, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord and inquire into his Temple.* Tho' a wealthy King, tho' an illustrious Prophet, yet he thought not himself too Great, or too Good, to wait on the Courts of the Lord. This he still more passionately expresses, *Psalms 84. How amiable are thy Dwellings O Lord of Hosts, My Soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord.* Nay, he even envieth the very Birds that Happiness of coming into *God's-House*, which he in Exile was debarr'd from.

from. *Yea, the very Sparrow* (as he goes on in his elegant Complaint) *hath found an House and the Swallow her Nest, where she may lay her Young, even thy Altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.* Now to what Purpose are these Things recorded in Scripture, but only to put us in Mind of doing the same, to provoke in us a pious Emulation of frequenting those solemn Assemblies, that are called for the Honour and Worship of God, and to inspire us with a Devotion truly becoming such sacred Places. For our Encouragement in this excellent Branch of Duty, we are expressly told by our Saviour, that if two of us shall agree on Earth, as touching any Thing that we shall ask, it shall be done for us of his Father which is in Heaven: For Says he, *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* And it was long since the Promise of God to the House that *Solomon* built for his Service, that *his Eyes would be open, and his Ears attent unto the Prayers that were made in that Place.* 2 Chron. vii. 15. And certainly in the Nature of the Thing, when our Petitions with united Force ascend up to Heaven, they bid much fairer for Success than any the most vehement Importunities of a solitary and single Devotion. When Christians with Heart and Voice unanimously address the Throne of Grace, they so nearly resemble the divine Employment of the
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Saints above, that God will infallibly answer their Requests, so far as is requisite for their real Benefit. Let the Consideration of this prevail upon Men to be constant Attendants at the *House of God*; since they are assured, that they shall there meet with such Assistances from above, as will enable them to perform all the several Parts of Duty required at their Hands, and will procure for them several invaluable Blessings. Let me beseech you my Brethren, to embrace every Opportunity of joining in Publick Worship, and Opportunities of doing this in this City, and particularly in this Parish, you can never want. Our Churches are continually open, ready to receive all Devout and well disposed Persons, where they may with their Understandings, join in well composed Prayers, expressive of all Wants, and adapted to every Circumstance and Condition of Life. But alas! notwithstanding such happy Conveniencies, how scandalously are they disregarded by the Generality? how thin and naked are the Houses of God for Six Days together? The *Exchange* and Places of Trade and Commerce so engross the Thoughts of Men and their Time, that they are at Leisure to maintain but little Correspondence with Heaven. If they can spare one Day in seven for the Service of God, they think it sufficient; and too often are provided with Excuses, (such as they are) even to deny him that. Whatever Pretences
Persons

Persons in distressed Circumstances may plead for their Neglect here, I am sure none can be alledged for those whom the bountiful Providence of *God* has raised above the Necessity of engaging in Secular Employments for Subsistence; especially such who complain of Time lying heavy upon their Hands, and therefore are forced to seek Relief in vain and idle Amusements, in formal and impertinent Vints.

FOURTHLY, and lastly, we must express our Reverence to *God's* Sanctuary, by a decent and devout Behaviour there: When we enter this Holy Place, we must for that time bid adieu to the World, withdraw our Thoughts, as well as the Infirmities of human Nature will permit, from all the Concerns of it, considering now that we are about to converse with the adorable Majesty of Heaven; and consequently, that the lowest Submission of Mind, and the most ardent Expressions of Devotion, are the only, and most acceptable Sacrifice we can offer him. Were we to appear before any earthly Prince, to crave any Favour at his Hands, how very careful and solicitous should we be to behave in his Presence with all possible Respect and Veneration? How shall we dare then to come into the Courts of the Lord with Rudeness and Unconcern, and rush into his Presence without the least shew of Devotion? And yet this is
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frequently practised ! How common is it to see some Persons as gravely composing themselves to Sleep, during the Service of the Church, as if they were persuaded that such a drowsy Posture was a necessary Part of the Duty of that Place ; while others are Whispering and Talking, not to say Laughing, to the great Scandal of their Profession, and the extreme Offence of their devouter Brethren. Did they seriously consider that God is present with them, they would surely have a greater Guard upon themselves, and behave differently. God indeed, as to his Essence is Omnipresent ; but yet still there are some Places where he may be said to be more peculiarly present than in others, and therefore in those Places he ought to be approached with a more respectful Deportment : Heaven is the Seat of his more immediate Residence, where he displays all his Ensigns of Glory and Majesty, and from whence he dispatches his Attendants to transact his Affairs here below. As Earthly Potentates have many Palaces in several Parts of their Dominions, where at different Times they differently keep their Court ; one whereof is generally erected in their Principal City, superiour in Magnificence and Grandeur to the rest ; So the Almighty, the King of Kings has his several Mansion Houses throughout the World, tho' his chief Dwelling be in Heaven, where he is encircled with Beams of Light and Glory, too strong

for Mortals to approach. These Mansion Houses in these lower Realms, are those Places that are dedicated and consecrated to his Service ; in which he is ever present, ready to dispense liberally his Favours to all that duly ask, surrounded with a Guard of Angels and Arch-Angels, who to us indeed are invisible ; but we are not so to them. This is what we call the divine *Schechinah*, which was manifested in great Splendour and Brightness from betwixt the Cherubim in the *Jewish* Tabernacle. The *Jews* were so immersed'd in Carnality, that they could not believe God was present with them, unless they had some apparent and visible Tokens of it : Wherefore God was pleased so far to comply with their Weakness, as to give them a corporeal and sensible Sign of his Presence with them. Tho' God does not appear amongst us Christians in that surprizing Manner as among the *Jews*, yet is he equally present with us, attended with his Holy Angels, and equally ready, if not more so, to communicate to us of his Blessings. With what Humility, with what Reverence and Devotion then ought we to carry our selves, in a Place so dreadful as is the House of God, and in the Presence of such honourable, such awful Company ? That our Employment here may at all Times be suitable to the Sacredness of the Place, I shall very briefly, by way of Conclusion, lay down

down some Directions proper to be observed: And here First, we must be careful to be always present at the Beginning of the Church Service; for a Deficiency here proves not only a Disturbance to a Congregation, by breaking in upon the Devotion of those who are putting up their Petitions to Heaven, but is also hurtful to our selves; as robbing us of the Benefit of Confession and Absolution, without which we cannot regularly joyn in the remaining Offices, or in Reason expect to be so readily heard of God, as those who have bore their Share in the whole Service.

AGAIN, We must be sure to joyn, not only with our Lips, but also with our Hearts, in those several Prayers that are allotted to us: As for those which the Officiating Priest is only to pronounce, we must follow him silently and mentally, and confirm for our selves every Collect, by expressing the earnest Desires of our Souls in a distinct and affectionate Amen.

As Oft as the Priest says let us pray, we should rouze up, and collect together all our Thoughts, and with more Vehemency and Zeal send up our Prayers to Heaven.

WHEN the *Psalms* are reading, we must alternately, or by turns, repeat them after the Minister; not in a sitting or kneeling Posture, but standing, the most agreeable to such sort of religious Offices; that the raising up our Bodies, may the better denote the Elevation of our Souls, when in Thanksgiving we lift them up to the Lord.

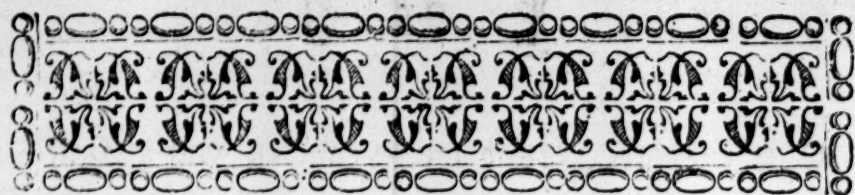
WHEN we are employed in praying, we must keep upon our Knees, a Posture well becoming humble Supplicants, deprecating Judgments, and imploring Mercy; and if our Souls are justly affected with a Sense of the great Majesty of God and our Dependance upon Him, we shall naturally shew it in a humble Posture of our Bodies.

WHILE The Priest is absolving and blessing the Congregation, no Person must rehearse after him; because these are authoritative Acts peculiar to his Office, whereto he is commissioned by God himself, the Fountain of all Authority and Power. I mention this the rather, because it is observed, that many, otherwise devout and regular Men, are constantly guilty of inroaching here upon the Priest's Office.

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ONCE more, permit me to caution you against an evil Custom, which, I am sorry to say, obtains almost every where ; and that is the Bowing, and Exchanging Compliments and Civilities one to another, during the very Time of Prayers. This is such an unseasonable way of shewing good 'Breeding, such a disregard to the Business you are supposed to be about, such a Contempt of God and his Ordinances, as deservedly calls for Animadversion ; and therefore I could not help taking Notice of it, and earnestly entreating you to desist from it for the future. These few Directions, with others, that every ones own Reason upon the least Reflection will suggest to him, if carefully followed, joyned to a daily and religious Attendance upon God's Sanctuary, will not only constitute us true Members of Christ's Church here on Earth ; but will also qualify us for Admission into that which is in Heaven, where we shall meet with Decency and Order, Harmony and Unanimity, Devotion and Happiness, in the greatest Perfection.

F I N I S.



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